



# OLD HWY 395 • ABERDEEN • FISH SPRINGS

THIS EASY ROUTE TAKES YOU LESS THAN A MILE FROM TODAY'S HWY. 395 BUT MORE THAN A CENTURY INTO THE PAST — BACK TO A TIME WHEN THE MAIN ROADWAY THROUGH THE EASTERN SIERRA WAS NOTHING BUT A PAIR OF WAGON TRACKS. TAKE THIS PRE-1962 ROUTE TO SEE SPECTACULAR SCENERY AT A LEISURELY PACE, WITH THE GHOSTS OF FRUIT FARMERS AND PROSPECTORS AS YOUR FELLOW TRAVELERS.



The jagged walls of Sawmill Canyon are a haven for rare Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. In the foreground, black volcanic rocks contrast sharply with the soft hues of the valley floor  
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**What to expect:** Easy driving, open year-round. Much of the route is paved and the unpaved parts are graded and well-maintained.

**Length:** 14.5 miles one way; 17.7 miles if you loop back via the “new” highway.

**Driving time:** about one hour.

**Getting there:** From Independence starting at the flashing traffic light in the center of town, go 8.3 miles north on U.S. 395 and turn left (west) onto Black Rock Springs Road. From Big Pine starting at the high school at the south end of town, go 17.5 miles south on 395 and turn right onto Black Rock Springs Road. (Or begin at the north end of the route, turning right onto Fish Springs Road 4.3 miles south of Big Pine.)

**Along the route:** Black Rock Springs Road leads straight toward the Sierra at one of its most ruggedly scenic points, Sawmill Canyon. A flume once carried wood from the creek to a nearby sawmill. Today, rare Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep come to the mouth of the canyon when deep winter snows drive them to lower elevations.

In less than a mile, the road meets old 395 at a grove of locust trees planted in the early 1890s to furnish wood for alkaline-tolerant fence posts. Turn right and drive north through black basalt lava flows. You'll pass the road to Division Creek Powerhouse, a working hydroelectric plant originally built in 1908 to power dredges digging the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

Aberdeen, at 5 miles along the route, was a small but thriving community in the first two decades of the 20th century — supported primarily by the Red Mountain Fruit Ranch to the north. The store and restaurant, open seasonally, features an old fireplace, historic photos and John Wayne's favorite beans.

The paved route becomes the black cinder “Tinemaha Road” where it intersects the road to Goodale Creek, site of a BLM campground. About a mile farther is Taboose Creek and a county campground. Taboose is derived from a Shoshone word for the edible ground nut or yellow nut grass, once a staple food for native Paiutes who irrigated meadows to enhance its growth.



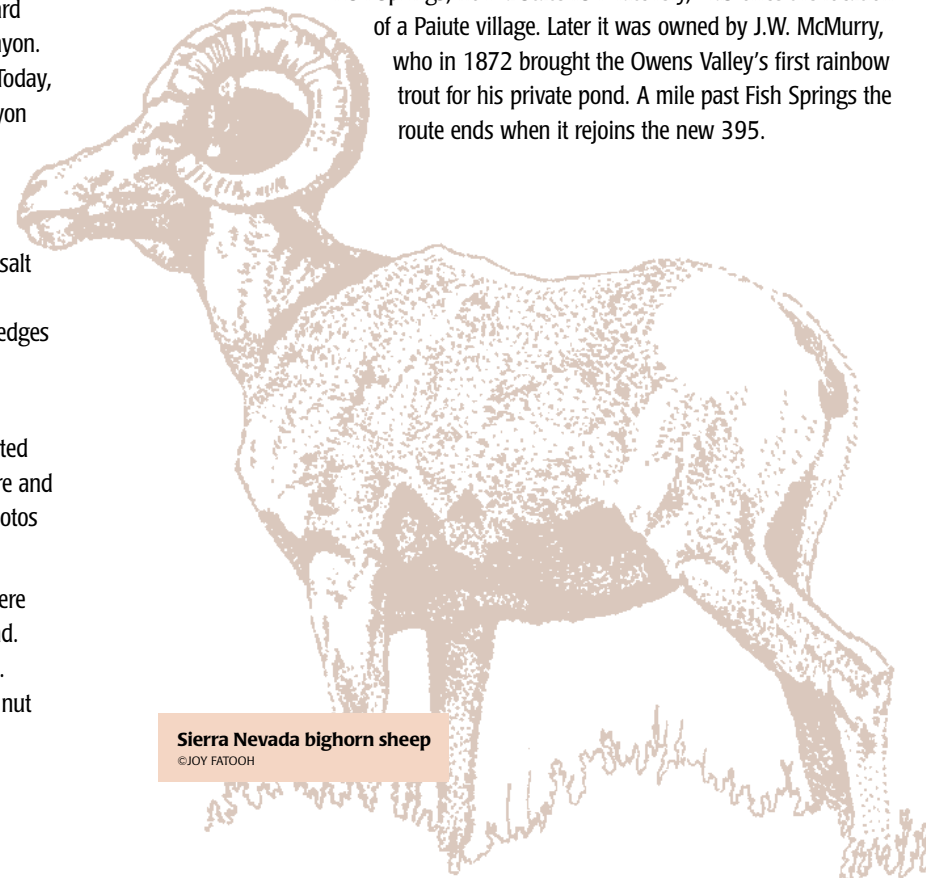
Rainbow trout  
©LAURA PATTERSON

From here, the graded dirt road heads into the Poverty Hills, named by disgusted gold miners when their extensive claims produced less than hoped. To the west you can see Red Mountain, the youngest volcanic cinder cone in the Owens Valley, formed only 600-800 years ago.

The road turns back into pavement as it crosses Tinemaha Creek, named for a legendary Paiute war chief. In the early 1900s this site was part of the thousand-acre Red Mountain Fruit Ranch. You can find remnants of the extensive irrigation system west of the county campground.

After crossing Birch Creek, 12 miles from the beginning of the route, you'll reach an intersection with no sign. Bear left (north), taking the road that passes a small hill of black rock. In half a mile is another intersection; continue north.

Fish Springs, now a state fish hatchery, was once the location of a Paiute village. Later it was owned by J.W. McMurry, who in 1872 brought the Owens Valley's first rainbow trout for his private pond. A mile past Fish Springs the route ends when it rejoins the new 395.



Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep  
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